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## Three Religions and One Destiny: Religions for a Better Humanity

**Imam Yahya Hendi, Dr. Michael Signer, and Reverend John Pawlikowski**

**Tuesday, February 7, 2006**

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Religions are once more becoming a potent force in social policy in many parts of the world, including the United States. But the history of religion's involvement in the social order is very mixed. At times religious groups have been a powerful force for justice & peace; but at times they have been instigators of conflict. We see both elements still at work today. If religion is to become a force for good in contemporary society it must deal with its dark side, anti-Semitism being a prime example. If the three Abrahamic religions, can in fact, begin to overcome their history of conflict, they can provide a model for similar efforts in society at large. And working together, they can become a powerful force for justice in ways none of them could do alone.

### **Imam Yahya Hendi**

Imam Yahya Hendi is the Muslim chaplain at Georgetown University, the first American University to hire a full-time Muslim chaplain. Imam Hendi is also the Imam of the Islamic Society of Frederick, and is the Muslim Chaplain at the National Naval Medical Center in Bethesda, MD. He also serves as a member and the spokesperson of the Islamic Jurisprudence Council of North America. He serves as adjunct faculty member at McDaniel College in Westminster, MD.

Imam Yahya Hendi has written numerous publications women in Islam, women and gender relations in Islam, the coming of the Messiah, and religion and Islam in the

United States. He has presented a multitude of interfaith and general lectures in the USA, Asia, Europe, central Asia, Eastern Europe and the Middle East over the past eight years. Mr. Hendi was one of the Muslim leaders who met with the President of the United States in the aftermath of the September 11 tragedy.

Imam Hendi appeared on many national and international television and Radio shows as an expert on Islam. Mr. Hendi serves on national and international interfaith councils, and in May 2002, Imam Hendi was chosen by Hartford Seminary to receive its annual "James Gettemy Significant Ministry Award" for his dedication to his Ministry and for his work to promote peace building between people of different religions.

Mr. Hendi holds a Master's degree in Comparative Religions from Hartford Seminary, Hartford, CT. He is currently working on his Ph.D. in Comparative Religion.

### **Dr. Michael Signer**

Rabbi Signer is Director of the Notre Dame Holocaust Project—an interdisciplinary faculty group that designs educational opportunities for students to engage in the study of the Shoah. Since 1998 he has been co-chair of the Joint Commission on Interreligious Affairs of the Reform movement.

Prior to joining the faculty at the University of Notre Dame in 1992, Rabbi Signer served as Professor of Jewish History at Hebrew Union College-Jewish Institute of Religion in Los Angeles from 1974-1991. At the College-Institute he taught courses in Jewish History, Jewish Liturgy and Jewish Biblical Commentaries. In 1995 Signer received a Doctor of Divinity honoris causa from Hebrew Union College-Jewish Institute of Religion.

His interest in interreligious affairs began during his doctoral studies at the Center for Medieval Studies at the University of Toronto where he wrote his dissertation on Andrew of St. Victor, a twelfth-century Christian Hebraist, under the direction of Rev. Leonard E. Boyle, OP. When he arrived in Los Angeles, he participated in the Priest-Rabbi dialogue and was one of the founders of the St. John's Major Seminar-Hebrew Union College academic exchange. He taught Bible courses at St. John's Seminary where priests for the Los Angeles Archdiocese are trained. In addition to developing that program, he organized a series of retreats for seminary faculty from Jewish, Catholic and Protestant institutions in California. He has taught at the Institut Kirche und Judentum at Alexander von Humboldt University in Berlin and at the Catholic Theology Faculty in the University of Augsburg. In addition, he was American Jewish Committee Scholar at Catholic Institutions of Higher Education in Poland at Warsaw, Lublin, Wroclaw, and Poznan. After the initial experience in Poland, he has organized international seminars at the Center for Dialogue and Prayer in Auschwitz and the Pontifical Academy of Theology in Krakow.

Rabbi Signer is the author and editor of five books on topics that range from Medieval Latin biblical commentaries to contemporary Jewish-Christian relations such as *Humanity at the Limit: The Impact of the Holocaust Experience on Jews and Christians*; *Memory and History in Judaism and Christianity*; *Jews and Christians in Twelfth-Century Europe*. He is one of the four authors of *Daberu Emet: A Jewish Statement on Christians and Christianity*. He has written articles for the *Oxford Dictionary of Judaism*, the *Encyclopedia of Medieval France*, and the *Encyclopedia of St. Augustine*.

### **Dr. Father John Pawlikowski**

Father Pawlikowski serves as the Professor of Ethics and the Director of the Catholic-Jewish Studies Program at the University of Chicago. John Pawlikowski's scholarly interests include the theological and ethical aspects of the Christian-Jewish relationship and public ethics. He has studied the Nazi Holocaust extensively enabling him to appreciate the ethical challenges facing the human community as it struggles with greatly enhanced power and extended responsibility for the future of all creation. He is President of the International Council of Christians and Jews and author of *Christ in the Light of the Christian Jewish Dialogue* and co-editor with Judith Banki of *Ethics in the Shadow of the Holocaust*.

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